



## Research Paper

### Unraveling the Impacts of Teacher's Self-Disclosure on Idiomatic Expression Learning and L2 Willingness to Communicate among EFL Learners

Masoud Taheri<sup>1</sup>, Mohsen Shahrokhi\*<sup>2</sup>, Mohammad Reza Talebinejad<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. in English Language Education, Department of English Language, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran

<sup>2,3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of English Language, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Iran  
[shahrokhi1651@yahoo.com](mailto:shahrokhi1651@yahoo.com)

<http://doi.org/10.71528/2024.1195652>

Received: 15 November, 2024

Accepted: 19 December, 2024

## ABSTRACT

While research on teacher self-disclosure (TSD) has been expanding, its specific effects as a teaching strategy on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) outcomes in Iran have not been thoroughly investigated. This study aimed to explore how TSD influences EFL learners, focusing on their comprehension of idiomatic expressions and their willingness to communicate in a second language (L2 WTC). Employing a quantitative, quasi-experimental design, the research involved a non-random sample of 99 EFL teachers and 64 upper-intermediate learners from Isfahan and Chahar-Mahal provinces. Data were collected using a scale measuring teachers' self-disclosure, a test for idiomatic expressions, and an L2 WTC questionnaire, all demonstrating strong reliability and validity. The findings revealed that EFL teachers frequently engage in self-disclosure, with this practice linked to various demographic factors. Notably, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis indicated that, apart from gender, teachers' educational background, teaching experience, and age significantly influenced their tendency to self-disclose. Furthermore, the study showed that TSD had a positive impact on learners' willingness to communicate and their understanding of idiomatic expressions. These insights underscore the importance of fostering positive teacher-student relationships, enhancing EFL learning outcomes, developing effective instructional materials, and creating professional development programs for EFL educators.

**Keywords:** TSD, EFL learners Idiomatic expressions, L2 WTC

## INTRODUCTION

The classroom functions as a multifaceted microsystem where a variety of elements such as class duration, teaching materials, and the interactions between teachers and students significantly affect learning outcomes (Khodamoradi et al., 2020; Mok, 2019; Werf et al., 2023). A key factor among these is the quality of interpersonal relationships, which plays a crucial role in determining the classroom atmosphere and reflects how students perceive their connections with teachers (Maslowski, 2003). In this setting, the teacher-student relationship is essential, as it facilitates meaningful interactions that promote learning. Research by Camas et al. (2021), Hagenauer et al. (2023), and Simon et al. (2022) indicates that when teachers practice self-disclosure, it can greatly enhance this relationship. This openness cultivates a classroom environment in which students feel more at ease sharing their thoughts and experiences, thus fostering a reciprocal and engaging dialogue.

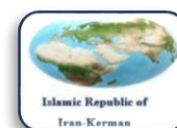
Self-disclosure, defined as the process through which individuals reveal personal information about themselves, can effectively enhance the learning experience (Block, 1952; Jourard & Lasakow, 1958). In educational settings, teachers often utilize self-disclosure to capture students' interest and stimulate conversations that deepen their understanding of course material (McBride & Wahl, 2005). Research indicates that when instructors incorporate personal anecdotes into their teaching, they not only humanize themselves but also create a sense of warmth and support that can motivate students to participate more actively (Woolfolk & Woolfolk, 1975; Aspy, 1969). Notably, Sorensen (1989) found that effective self-disclosure fosters better rapport between teachers and students, distinguishing successful educators from their less effective counterparts.

Despite the advantages, self-disclosure in pedagogy presents a double-edged sword; while it can foster emotional learning and bolster interpersonal connections, excessive or inappropriate disclosure may lead to discomfort or disengagement among students (Kearney et al., 1991; Nussbaum, 1992). Therefore, the nature of the information shared and how it aligns with classroom objectives are critical for maximizing the benefits of TSD (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Martin et al., 1999).

In the context of language learning, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, the challenges of mastering idiomatic expressions are significant. EFL learners often possess a theoretical vocabulary base yet struggle with the practical application of idioms, which are commonly used in authentic communication (Wray, 2002). The relevance of idiomatic expressions extends beyond vocabulary acquisition; they are integral to achieving communicative competence in English, allowing learners to navigate cultural nuances and engage in more fluid conversations.

Moreover, a key determinant of language acquisition success is the notion of L2 WTC, which encapsulates an individual's readiness to engage in conversations using a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This construct has garnered considerable attention in language education, as fostering L2 WTC is essential for promoting active engagement in language practice, a critical component of achieving fluency (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). Research indicates that various factors influence WTC, including personality traits, classroom dynamics, and particularly the behaviors of educators (Brauer et al., 2023; Cao, 2009; Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Peng, 2014; Wei & Xu, 2021).

Despite the increasing attention to TSD in educational research, there remains a notable gap in understanding its specific impacts on language learning, particularly concerning idiomatic expressions within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. While existing studies have established the general



benefits of self-disclosure—such as enhanced student engagement and improved interpersonal relationships—few have explored how this pedagogical strategy directly influences learners' comprehension and usage of idiomatic expressions. Idioms are integral to effective communication in English, enriching both spoken and written discourse (De Caro, 2009; Brenner, 2011; Zyzik, 2011). However, traditional language instruction often neglects idioms or presents them in isolation, failing to consider their contextual usage in authentic communication (Pham et al., 2020). This oversight highlights a critical need for research that examines how TSD can facilitate EFL learners' mastery of idiomatic expressions, thereby addressing a significant gap in current pedagogical approaches.

In the Iranian context, where language classrooms often serve as the primary environment for practicing English, understanding how TSD influences WTC is particularly crucial. This is especially relevant given the cultural and educational dynamics that may affect learners' communicative behaviors. Addressing this gap will not only enhance theoretical insights into L2 WTC but also provide practical implications for improving EFL instruction and fostering a more communicative and interactive learning environment.

This study aims to address significant gaps in the existing literature by exploring how TSD impacts students' mastery of idiomatic expressions and their L2 WTC. The goal is to gather empirical data that can guide educational practices, fostering the creation of innovative teaching strategies that enhance learners' understanding of idioms and boost their confidence in using English. To achieve this, the research has been framed around a couple of key questions:

**RQ1:** Is there a significant difference in the learning outcomes of idiomatic expressions between Iranian EFL learners taught through TSD and those taught using conventional methods?

**RQ2:** Is there a significant difference in the improvement of L2 WTC among Iranian EFL learners instructed through TSD compared to those taught through conventional approaches?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### TSD Embedded in Sociocultural Theory

TSD, often defined as the intentional sharing of personal information by teachers with their students, has been the focus of extensive research due to its implications for educational practices and student outcomes (Taheri et al., 2024). Early research, including seminal studies by Nussbaum and Scott (1979), identified TSD as a relational and instructional strategy that fosters a positive classroom atmosphere and enhances emotional learning. Sorensen (1989) extended this understanding by differentiating between effective and ineffective self-disclosure, finding that disclosures perceived as relevant and positively framed were more likely to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Conversely, irrelevant or overly personal disclosures were viewed as unprofessional, diminishing the teacher's credibility and potentially distracting students from the instructional content.

Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasizes the central role of social interaction in cognitive and linguistic development, particularly within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD delineates the space between learners' independent capabilities and what they can achieve with expert guidance or scaffolding. In language learning contexts, teachers act as mediators, bridging the gap between learners' existing knowledge and their developmental potential through dynamic interactions



(Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In the context of EFL instruction, TSD can be viewed as a pedagogical tool grounded in sociocultural principles. By sharing personal anecdotes and relevant experiences, teachers humanize the classroom environment, fostering affective engagement and reducing the hierarchical distance between teacher and student (Henry & Thorsen, 2021; Shirvan & Taherian, 2020). This is particularly critical in EFL contexts, where anxiety and cultural barriers can hinder communication (Kök & Kantar, 2024). TSD aligns with the scaffolding process, offering learners culturally contextualized examples of language usage, particularly idiomatic expressions.

Idiomatic expressions pose unique challenges for EFL learners due to their non-literal nature and cultural specificity (De Caro, 2009; Brenner, 2011). By embedding idioms within self-disclosure narratives, teachers provide authentic, contextualized input, aligning with Vygotsky's notion of internalization—where external, socially mediated experiences gradually become part of learners' cognitive repertoire (Lantolf, 2011). Recent studies affirm that TSD enhances instructional clarity and facilitates complex language acquisition by providing tangible, real-world examples (Cayanus & Martin, 2016; Cayanus & Heisler, 2013).

Moreover, the positive emotional climate fostered through TSD is consistent with Vygotsky's view that affective and cognitive development are intertwined. Research indicates that when students perceive teachers as approachable and relatable through personal sharing, their motivation and engagement improve significantly (Amirian et al., 2021; Jebbour & Mouaid, 2019; Kuhzad & Zarfsaz, 2023). Shirvan and Taherian (2020) highlight that teachers' relational identity work, which includes self-disclosure, enhances students' enjoyment and emotional connectedness, creating an optimal environment for language learning.

### **Willingness to Communicate: A Multilayered Construct**

WTC first introduced by MacIntyre et al. (1998), has become a foundational element in research related to acquiring a second language. WTC refers to an individual's preparedness to start a conversation when the chance arises. This willingness is shaped by various interconnected elements, including psychological aspects, language skills, and the surrounding environment. Recent studies underscore its dynamic and situational nature, particularly in classroom settings where teacher behaviors significantly shape learners' communication tendencies (Amirian et al., 2021; Kuhzad & Zarfsaz, 2023).

At its core, WTC integrates affective, cognitive, and social variables, emphasizing that learners' motivation, confidence, and perceptions of the classroom environment are key determinants of communication readiness (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, 2002). TSD directly contributes to fostering these factors by creating a supportive, low-anxiety environment (Kök & Kantar, 2024; Henry & Thorsen, 2021). When teachers share relevant personal insights, they model openness and vulnerability, encouraging reciprocity and reducing learners' communicative anxiety (Jebbour & Mouaid, 2019).

Amirian et al. (2021) conducted a study that reveals a strong connection between teacher immediacy and self-disclosure, contributing to increased WTC EFL students, especially in Iran. Their findings suggest that when teachers share personal anecdotes and life stories, it cultivates an atmosphere of trust and closeness, which in turn encourages students to actively engage in classroom discussions. In a similar vein, Kuhzad and Zarfsaz (2023) also emphasize that TSD acts as a powerful motivator,



enhancing student engagement irrespective of gender, and thereby promoting a communicative learning environment.

Furthermore, recent research by Shirvan and Taherian (2020) highlights the importance of positive relational dynamics in boosting learners' classroom enjoyment—a key predictor of L2 WTC. Teachers' relational identity work, including self-disclosure, fosters emotional engagement, encouraging learners to participate actively in classroom discussions. This emotional dimension aligns with MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of affective and cognitive variables in shaping WTC.

The association between TSD and EFL learners' L2 WTC is underexplored. L2 WTC is a vital construct that influences students' readiness to engage in conversations using a second language (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Although various individual traits, such as motivation and self-confidence, have been identified as determinants of WTC (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002), the role of classroom contextual factors, particularly in the Iranian EFL environment, remains inadequately understood. The dynamics of student-teacher interactions are shaped by multiple factors, including personal characteristics, past experiences, and the overall school environment (Calarco, 2019; Calarco et al., 2019; Demszky et al., 2021). TSD is one such variable that can significantly impact these interactions and, consequently, student outcomes (Bouhafa et al., 2023; Jebbour, 2018; Kromka, 2020).

### **Idiomatic Expression Learning**

Mastering idiomatic expressions remains a considerable challenge for EFL learners due to their inherent semantic opacity and cultural specificity. Unlike regular vocabulary, idiomatic expressions convey meanings that cannot be deciphered through a literal interpretation of their individual components. One prominent barrier in idiomatic learning stems from the structural rigidity of idioms. Unlike flexible sentence structures, idiomatic phrases are syntactically fixed, and any attempt to modify their word order, tense, or lexical components renders them nonsensical (Boers et al., 2006). EFL learners accustomed to syntactic flexibility in their first language often struggle with this constraint, which adds another layer of complexity to idiom acquisition. Moreover, idioms are deeply embedded in socio-cultural norms and practices, making cultural dissonance a significant hurdle for learners unfamiliar with the subtleties of English-speaking contexts (Qin, 2022; Shirvan & Taherian, 2020). For instance, idiomatic expressions rooted in specific historical or cultural events may require cultural knowledge that goes beyond language instruction, further alienating learners from understanding their pragmatic significance.

Another critical issue lies in the lack of sufficient exposure to idiomatic language in formal educational settings. Traditional instructional materials often prioritize grammatical structures and vocabulary, relegating idioms to the periphery of the curriculum (Amirian et al., 2021). As idiomatic expressions are more prevalent in informal spoken English, media, and literature, EFL learners are frequently underprepared to decode idiomatic phrases encountered in real-world contexts. This limited exposure inhibits their ability to recognize and use idioms appropriately in natural conversations, thereby affecting their communicative competence and WTC (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). Additionally, the pragmatic appropriateness of idioms adds another layer of difficulty. Understanding when and how to use idioms requires both linguistic and cultural awareness, making idiom acquisition particularly



challenging for learners who lack opportunities for authentic language interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Addressing these challenges necessitates pedagogical strategies that combine explicit instruction, contextualized learning, and student-centered engagement. Recent studies emphasize the importance of direct, explicit teaching of idioms, where learners are provided with clear explanations of idiomatic expressions, their meanings, and their cultural significance (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008; Amirian et al., 2021). For example, educators can deconstruct idioms into their literal and figurative meanings, helping learners bridge the gap between unfamiliar phrases and their intended meanings. Incorporating culturally rich narratives or anecdotes to illustrate idiomatic usage enables learners to better connect with the expressions and understand their real-world implications (Jebbour & Mouaid, 2019).

TSD has also emerged as a valuable strategy for facilitating idiomatic learning. By sharing personal experiences that incorporate idiomatic expressions, educators can provide relatable, real-world examples that make idioms more tangible and memorable for learners (Cayanus & Martin, 2008; Amirian et al., 2021). Self-disclosure not only humanizes teachers but also creates a supportive and engaging classroom environment, encouraging students to take linguistic risks and experiment with idiomatic expressions in their communication (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). Moreover, the relational immediacy fostered through TSD has been shown to enhance learners' L2 WTC, a critical factor in idiomatic mastery (Shirvan & Taherian, 2020).

A significant body of research has investigated how TSD influences a range of student outcomes, but there are still notable areas that require further exploration. Most studies have primarily concentrated on aspects like student motivation, classroom atmosphere, and levels of engagement (Kuhzad & Zarfsaz, 2023; Shirvan & Taherian, 2020). However, the particular effects of TSD on learning idiomatic expressions have not been thoroughly examined.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The research utilized a quantitative approach structured as a quasi-experimental design. This design followed a sequence consisting of a pretest, an intervention, and a posttest. Within this framework, participants were divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The primary goal of this phase of the study was to investigate how the independent variable, TSD, influenced the development of idiomatic expressions and the L2 WTC among EFL students, which served as the dependent variables.

### **Participants**

The study involved 64 male EFL learners from two private language schools in Chahar-mahal province, Iran. Participants, aged 18 on average, were selected non-randomly based on a placement test to ensure alignment with the study's quasi-experimental design requirements, as outlined by Hinkel (2011). Initially, 67 upper-intermediate students were identified: 35 in the experimental group and 32 in the control group. Homogeneity in proficiency was double-checked using the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), leading to the exclusion of one experimental and two control group participants who did not



meet the upper-intermediate proficiency criteria. This rigorous selection ensured comparability between the experimental group, exposed to TSD, and the control group, following conventional teaching methods.

## **Instruments**

### **OQPT**

The OQPT Version 2, published by Oxford University Press is a reliable and efficient instrument designed to assess the proficiency level of EFL students. The test aims to provide a quick and accurate placement of students in appropriate language courses or programs, based on their English language abilities.

### **Test of Idiomatic Expression as Pretest and Posttest**

The study employed a 30-item multiple-choice test as both a pretest and posttest to measure the influence of TSD on Iranian EFL learners' acquisition of idiomatic expressions. Thirty idioms, selected based on pedagogical relevance to an upper-intermediate extracurricular class, were drawn from "English Idioms in Use" by McCarthy and O'Dell (2002). These idioms were chosen for their frequency, as determined by computational analyses of the CANCODE and Cambridge International Corpora, ensuring both linguistic authenticity and practical applicability.

The initial selection comprised 60 idioms, systematically sampled from each thematic unit in the source text to ensure balanced coverage. This list was refined through expert peer review, narrowing it to 30 idioms aligned with course objectives and participant proficiency levels. These idioms formed the basis of the test, designed to measure learners' comprehension and contextual application skills. The posttest mirrored the pretest but featured restructured items and modified contexts for the core idioms, alongside revised distractors, ensuring a robust evaluation of retention and understanding.

Reliability was established via a test-retest procedure with a pilot group of 12 learners, yielding high consistency coefficients ( $r = .87$  for the pretest;  $r = .89$  for the posttest), demonstrating the test's stability and suitability for the study's objectives. This rigorous methodological approach underscores the validity of the findings regarding TSD as an instructional strategy in idiomatic language acquisition.

### **L2 WTC Questionnaire**

The measurement of L2 WTC was conducted using a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire adopted from Weda et al. (2021). This questionnaire, validated by its original authors, reflected students' perceptions and attitudes toward participating in English class activities. Each item required participants to rate their level of agreement on a 3-point Likert scale, where 1 = agree, 2 = uncertain, and 3 = disagree.

To ensure its validity for our context, we maintained the structure and content of the original questionnaire, which was written in English. The items were peer-reviewed by two professors of applied linguistics to confirm their relevance and alignment with our study's objectives. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed via a Cronbach's alpha reliability test, which yielded a significant coefficient ( $r = .92$ ), indicating strong internal consistency among the items. This robust reliability score ensured that the questionnaire reliably measured the construct of L2 WTC among the participants.



## Data Collection Procedures

This study was conducted at two language schools in Chahar-mahal province, where participants were EFL learners enrolled in an elective extracurricular course focused on enhancing proficiency in idiomatic expressions. The course, supplementary to students' regular curriculum, was designed to ensure participant motivation, thereby providing a more accurate measure of the influence of TSD on idiomatic expression development and L2 WTC.

Administering an OQPT, 64 learners at an upper-intermediate level were carefully divided into two groups for an experiment and a control condition without using random selection. To establish a baseline for comparison, both groups underwent a pre-test focused on idiomatic phrases and completed a questionnaire about their WTC. The instructor, who was also the researcher, dedicated six weeks to teaching a total of 30 idioms, introducing five each week in lessons that lasted about 50 minutes. The group participating in the experimental condition learned using TSD, while the control group experienced traditional teaching methods. The instruction followed the PPP (Presentation, Practice, and Production) framework, which is particularly effective as it aligns with how learners process language cognitively (Angraeni et al., 2023; Nopiyadi et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2023).

In the experimental group, the teaching method followed a structured sequence: (A) Introduction of the idiom with both its literal and figurative meanings; (B) TSD through personal anecdotes, such as sharing experiences related to feeling like a "square peg in a round hole"; (C) Language analysis to break down the idiom's components; (D) Discussion where students shared similar personal experiences; (E) Contextualization with real-life examples; (F) Practice, including speaking and writing exercises; and (G) Feedback to correct and clarify understanding. In contrast, the control group followed the same steps but omitted the teacher's self-disclosure (Step B).

At the end of the six-week period, both groups took a post-test on idiomatic expressions and completed a follow-up L2 WTC survey to assess any changes in proficiency and communication willingness.

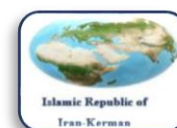
## Data Analysis

The numerical data gathered for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics through SPSS (version 27). To tackle Research Question 1, the Mann-Whitney U test was chosen because the data did not follow a normal distribution and included notable outliers. This test serves as a reliable alternative to the independent samples t-test when faced with such conditions. For Research Question 2, the independent samples t-test was then employed to assess the differences in L2 WTC between the two groups after treatment. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed that the data was normally distributed, making the use of this parametric test appropriate.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Question One

The first research question aimed to explore whether Iranian EFL learners taught idiomatic expressions through teachers' self-disclosure outperformed those taught through conventional methods. Data were initially analyzed to ensure statistical validity, with normality testing conducted on participants' Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) scores. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test suggested normal distribution (KS



= .097,  $p = .200$ ), but the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated a deviation from normality ( $SW = .961$ ,  $p = .041$ ). Consequently, non-parametric inferential statistics, specifically the Mann-Whitney U test, were applied to compare the experimental and control groups. The results revealed no significant difference in OQPT scores ( $U = 480.000$ ,  $p = .685$ ), indicating homogeneity in the participants' general proficiency levels.

**Table 1**

*Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics<sup>a</sup> on OQPT*

Mann-Whitney U	480.000
Wilcoxon W	945.000
Z	-.406
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.685

a. Grouping Variable: Experimental/Control

Pretest data on idiomatic expression proficiency were also analyzed to ensure group equivalence. Both normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov  $KS = .159$ ,  $p = .030$ ; Shapiro-Wilk  $SW = .759$ ,  $p = .010$ ) indicated non-normal distributions, prompting the use of the Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed no significant difference between the groups at the pretest stage ( $U = 279.000$ ,  $p = .689$ ), suggesting the groups were statistically similar in their initial proficiency.

**Table 2**

*Whitney U Test Statistics<sup>a</sup> for idiomatic expression pretest*

Mann-Whitney U	279.000
Wilcoxon W	458.000
Z	-1.351
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.689

a. Grouping Variable: Experimental/Control

Regarding the posttest on idiomatic expressions, normality tests revealed significant deviations from normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov  $KS = .208$ ,  $p = .000$ ; Shapiro-Wilk  $SW = .934$ ,  $p = .002$ ). As such, the Mann-Whitney U test was again employed. The results indicated a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ( $U = 323.000$ ,  $p = .011$ ), with the self-disclosure method proving to be more effective in teaching idiomatic expressions than the conventional approach.

**Table 3**

*Whitney U test statistics<sup>a</sup> for idiomatic expression post-test*

Mann-Whitney U	323.000
Wilcoxon W	788.000
Z	-2.548
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.011

a. Grouping Variable: Experimental/Control



In conclusion, the analysis of pretest and posttest data supports the effectiveness of TSD in enhancing the learning of idiomatic expressions among Iranian EFL learners.

### **Discussion of Question One**

The study unveiled a notable disparity between the experimental group, which was exposed to TSD, and the control group. Prior research concerning the consequences of TSD has yielded a spectrum of outcomes in relation to student's educational achievements. Some investigations have documented positive effects on students' motivation, engagement, and communication proficiencies (Jebbour, 2021; Henry & Thorsen, 2021; Kromka, 2020; McCarthy & Schmeck, 1982; Rahimi Larki, 2021; Stoltz et al., 2014; Qin, 2022; Youells, 1981).

Conversely, alternative research endeavors have postulated potential drawbacks associated with TSD, such as a potential erosion of teacher authority or perceived privacy infringement (Naumann, 1988; Nussbaum & Scott, 1979). Additionally, distinct research has presented evidence suggesting that when teachers share personal experiences, it does not substantially affect the learners' overall academic achievements (Aubry, 2009; Ivy, 2016). This assortment of results highlights the intricate nature of TSD and its diverse consequences within the realm of education.

Interpersonal communication is a gradual journey of sharing personal information, which helps strengthen the bonds between individuals, as indicated by Altman and Taylor (1973). When applied to language learning, TSD can significantly improve the dynamic between teachers and students, creating a more relaxed and inviting atmosphere for learning. This supportive environment may encourage students to take risks, participate more actively in conversations, and demonstrate a better grasp of idiomatic language.

Another explanation according to Krashen's (Krashen, 1985) theory is that language acquisition is impeded by emotional factors, known as the affective filter. TSD, when employed appropriately, may lower learners' affective filter, reducing anxiety and promoting a more relaxed atmosphere. As a result, EFL learners in the experimental group might have felt more at ease, facilitating their access to implicit knowledge of idiomatic expressions and enhancing their test performance.

The next justification is supported by the social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). This theory posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. When teachers engage in self-disclosure, learners may perceive them as role models, providing authentic language use models beyond the conventional instructional materials. Consequently, exposure to idiomatic expressions within meaningful contexts might have enabled better understanding among learners in the experimental group.

Furthermore, within the framework of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), language learning is seen as a social process that occurs through participation in authentic communicative contexts. TSD may have contributed to creating a closer-knit community in the classroom, where learners actively engage with language in a real-life context. As a result, students in the experimental group may have had more opportunities to practice and assimilate idiomatic expressions effectively.

### **Research Question Two**

To address the second research question, a series of initial measures were conducted to confirm that inferential statistical techniques were suitable for use. Initially, we assessed whether the participants'



pretest and posttest scores for L2 WTC followed a normal distribution and checked for any outliers. The normality of the data was evaluated using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. For the pretest scores, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test returned a value of 0.151 ( $p = 0.061$ ), while the Shapiro-Wilk test produced a value of 0.947 ( $p = 0.708$ ), indicating a normal distribution of the scores. Likewise, when analyzing the posttest scores, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed a statistic of 0.134 ( $p = 0.810$ ), and the Shapiro-Wilk test yielded a statistic of 0.966 ( $p = 0.073$ ), both of which reinforced the assumption of normality.

**Table 4**

*Independent samples t-test for L2 WTC pretest of the two groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							e		Lower	Upper
L2 WTC Pretest	Equal variances assumed	1.491	.227	2.73 5	56	.307	0.1484	3.972	-.418	1.039
	Equal variances not assumed			2.73 5	51.47 8	.307	0.1484	3.97	-.418	1.041

To investigate the differences before the intervention, an independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the experimental and control groups. The findings showed that there was no statistically significant difference ( $t(56) = 2.735$ ,  $p = 0.307$ ). This implies that any variations noted in the post-test scores cannot be linked to the initial differences between the groups.

**Table 5**

*Paired Samples t-Test for L2 WTC Pretest and Posttest of Groups*

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Control Group	PRE- TEST POS- TEST	-0.6852	1.41300	2.41163	-11.08190	-.91810	-3.032	28	.031



Experimental group	PRE-TEST POST-TEST	-1.3659	0.80024	1.63144	-11.08190	-2.31810	-2.240	28	.001
--------------------	-----------------------	---------	---------	---------	-----------	----------	--------	----	------

Within-group comparisons were then conducted to evaluate the effects of the intervention. The control group showed a statistically significant improvement in L2 WTC scores from pretest to posttest ( $t(28) = -3.032, p = 0.031$ ). The experimental group demonstrated a more substantial improvement, with a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ( $t(28) = -2.240, p = 0.001$ ).

**Table 6**

*Independent samples t-test for L2 WTC posttests of the two groups*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
L2 WTC Posttest	Equal variances assumed	1.948	.318	1.573	56	.040	-0.5293	2.024	.692	1.409
	Equal variances not assumed			1.573	56	.040	-0.5293	2.024	.692	1.409

An independent samples t-test conducted on the post-test scores showed that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group ( $t(56) = 1.573, p = 0.040$ ). This indicates that the TSD had a considerably positive effect on improving the experimental group's L2 WTC, especially when compared to the conventional teaching approach implemented with the control group.

### Discussion of Question Two

The findings elucidated a significant enhancement in L2 WTC within the cohort exposed to TSD. Prior scholarship focusing on L2 WTC has underscored its pivotal role in the realm of language acquisition and interpersonal communication (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Numerous determinants, including teacher attributes, classroom milieu, and student dispositions, have been examined concerning their relationship with L2 WTC. Previous investigations have delineated associations between TSD and students' motivation to engage in communication (Cayanus & Martin, 2008; Cayanus et al., 2009; Henry & Thorsen, 2021; Jebbour & Mouaid, 2019; Kök & Kantar, 2024; Kuhzad & Zarfsaz, 2023).



This research took a unique approach by exploring how TSD influences students' L2 WTC within real classroom settings. The beneficial relationship found between TSD and students' L2 WTC can be understood through various theoretical lenses, including the social exchange model, self-determination theory, the modeling perspective, and the trust model (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994). These frameworks offer essential insights into how the observed increase in L2 WTC occurs, highlighting the complex interactions involved in the teacher-student dynamic.

The social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) posits that social interactions involve an exchange of resources and benefits. TSD can be seen as a form of social exchange, where teachers share personal information to establish rapport and trust with students. In response, students may reciprocate by demonstrating a greater L2 WTC.

The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2013) suggests that individuals are motivated when they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. TSD, when conveying relatable experiences, may enhance learners' sense of relatedness, fostering a supportive learning environment. Feeling connected to the teacher may motivate students to engage in L2 communication more willingly.

The modeling perspective, based on Bandura's social learning theory (1977), highlights that individuals learn by observing and imitating others, particularly those they perceive as competent. In the context of the finding that TSD enhances learners' L2 WTC, the modeling theory offers key insights. First, observational learning occurs as students observe the teacher's effective use of language during self-disclosure, providing concrete examples of language use in authentic contexts. Second, this modeling boosts learners' confidence, as they see the teacher successfully employing idiomatic expressions and engaging in communication, encouraging them to replicate similar behaviors. Finally, teachers, as authoritative figures, significantly influence student behavior; thus, their self-disclosure can make students more inclined to emulate their communicative actions, fostering greater L2 WTC.

The trust model (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994) further explains the role of TSD in improving L2 WTC. By sharing personal experiences, teachers cultivate trust with their students, creating a supportive classroom environment. This trust reduces communication apprehension, as students feel more secure and encouraged to speak in the L2. Additionally, teachers' self-disclosure increases their perceived credibility, making them appear more approachable and relatable, which in turn motivates students to engage more actively in communication. This dual function of self-disclosure, both as a model for language use and a means to build trust, plays a critical role in enhancing students' willingness to communicate in the target language.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from this research align with previous studies that emphasize the positive role of teachers' personal sharing on learning outcomes. By utilizing various theoretical frameworks, including social penetration theory, the affective filter hypothesis, social learning theory, and the community of practice concept, we can gain deeper insight into how these effects come about. Incorporating TSD in EFL classrooms may significantly improve language skills, especially with idiomatic expressions, while creating a welcoming and genuine learning atmosphere. However, it's crucial to take into account cultural



and contextual elements when implementing this method to maximize its success across different educational environments.

Moreover, this study sheds light on the favorable influence of TSD on EFL learners' L2 WTC. It underscores the importance of strong teacher-student relationships, a sense of connection, role modeling, and trust, all of which are vital in building a nurturing educational space that inspires students to participate in meaningful and confident communication in their second language.

### **Implications**

The findings have theoretical relevance to English language education, as they are consistent with social learning theory and the community of practice framework. These perspectives provided by these viewpoints underscore the significance of educators serving as models and the inherently social aspect of acquiring language skills, as outlined by Bandura (1977), and Lave and Wenger (1991). By observing TSD, students can learn effective communication strategies and feel more connected to the classroom community, promoting a sense of belonging that encourages communication in the target language.

Moreover, the study aligns with the sociocultural theory, underscoring the pivotal role of social engagement in cognitive growth. Vygotsky's (1978) perspective that education is influenced by social factors is echoed here, with the study suggesting that when teachers share personal insights, it can act as an effective mechanism for supporting student education within their ZPD. Furthermore, the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996) corroborates these results, proposing that significant communicative exchanges, promoted by TSD, are instrumental in advancing language learning through negotiation of meaning and feedback.

The findings of this study hold considerable practical value for a range of stakeholders involved in EFL education, such as teacher trainers, school administrators, and EFL instructors. The research highlights the vital role of TSD as an effective teaching strategy in language education. By leveraging concepts from social penetration theory and social learning theory, educators can use self-disclosure purposefully to cultivate a welcoming and supportive classroom atmosphere. When teachers present themselves as genuine language role models and nurture a sense of community, they can enhance students' language skills and L2 WTC.

For curriculum developers, it is crucial to weave TSD opportunities into lesson plans and teaching resources. This could involve designing activities that prompt teachers to share their narratives, experiences, and relevant examples related to the language content. Such practices not only demonstrate authentic language use but also create a more engaging and relatable educational experience for learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Educational leaders overseeing professional development for teachers should emphasize the inclusion of self-disclosure training in their programs. By acknowledging the significance of self-disclosure and its influence on teaching quality, administrators can help cultivate well-rounded EFL educators. Development programs should be tailored to meet the unique needs of teachers, taking into account their demographic backgrounds, to ensure that all educators receive relevant and impactful training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The implications of this research stress the essential function of TSD in improving EFL instruction and learning outcomes. By grasping and implementing the theoretical foundations of self-



disclosure, educators can foster more supportive and effective learning environments. These environments not only enhance language proficiency and communication readiness among EFL students but also facilitate the professional growth of EFL teachers. By integrating these insights into teacher education, professional development initiatives, and classroom practices, all stakeholders can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to EFL education.

### Suggestions for Further Research

To deepen our understanding of how instructors sharing personal experiences affects language education and impacts learning outcomes, several research directions are suggested. Firstly, conducting studies over an extended period could help us analyze the lasting influence of TSD on language skills, communication abilities, and overall learning results of EFL students. Such longitudinal research would provide essential insights into how self-disclosure techniques hold up over time and their long-term effectiveness.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to carry out comparative studies across different cultures to examine how the effects of TSD vary among EFL learners from diverse backgrounds. These investigations would enhance our knowledge of how cultural elements shape the effectiveness of self-disclosure in teaching and its ramifications for teacher-student dynamics. By exploring this relationship, we can pave the way for more culturally adaptable teaching strategies.

Lastly, employing a mixed-methods research strategy, which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, could offer a richer and more detailed view of TSD and its effects. Gathering qualitative insights through methods like interviews or classroom observations can reveal teachers' viewpoints and experiences regarding self-disclosure, enriching the quantitative data and providing a comprehensive understanding of this practice.

### References

- Altman, I., & Taylor, D. A. (1973). *Social penetration: The development of interpersonal relationships*. Rinehart & Winston.
- Amirian, Z., Rezazadeh, M., & Rahimi-Dashti, M. (2021). Teachers' immediacy, self-disclosure, and technology policy as predictors of willingness to communicate: A structural equational modeling analysis. In *New perspectives on willingness to communicate in a second language* (pp. 219-234). Springer International Publishing.
- Anggraeni, C. W., Mujiyanto, J., Rustipa, K., & Widhiyanto, W. (2024). Effects of utilizing self-regulated learning-based instruction on EFL students' academic writing skills: a mixed-method investigation.
- Aspy, D. N. (1969). The effect of teacher-offered conditions of empathy, positive regard, and congruence upon student achievement. *Florida Journal of Educational Research*, 11(1), 39-48.
- Aubry, J. M. (2009). *Motivation and instructor's self-disclosure using Facebook in a French online course context*. University of South Florida.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.



- Boers, F., & Lindstromberg, S. (2008). Closing chapter: From Empirical Findings to Pedagogical Practice. *Cognitive linguistic approaches to teaching vocabulary and phraseology*, 375-393.
- Boers, F., Demecheleer, M., & Eyckmans, J. (2004). Etymological elaboration as a strategy for learning idioms. In P. Bogaards and B. Laufer, *Vocabulary in a second language: selection, acquisition, and testing*, 53-78. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bouhafa, Y., Bharaj, P. K., & Simpson, A. (2023). Examining the relationships between teacher self-disclosure and emotional and behavioral engagement of STEM undergraduate research scholars: A structural equation. *Education Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13080821>
- Brauer, K., Barabadi, E., Aghaee, E., Alrabai, F., Elahi Shirvan, M., Sendatzki, R., & Vierow, L.M. (2023). Impostor Phenomenon and L2 willingness to communicate: Testing communication anxiety and perceived L2 competence as mediators. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. [https://doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1060091](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1060091)
- Brenner, G. (2011). *Webster's new world American idioms handbook*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Calarco, J., Pascoe, C. & Silva, T. (2019). Social Class and Student-Teacher Interactions. In T. Domina, B. Gibbs, L. Nunn & A. Penner (Ed.), *Education and Society: An Introduction to Key Issues in the Sociology of Education* (pp. 96-109). Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520968301-009>
- Camas Garrido, L., Valero Moya, A., & Vendrell Morancho, M. (2021). The teacher-student relationship in the use of social network sites for educational purposes: A systematic review. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 10(1), 137-156.
- Cayanus, J. L., & Heisler, J. (2013). *Teacher self-disclosure: Exploring a fourth dimension*. National Communication Association.
- Cayanus, J. L., & Martin, M. M. (2008). Teacher self-disclosure: Amount, relevance, and negativity. *Communication Quarterly*, 56(3), 325-341.
- Cayanus, J. L., Martin, M. M., & Goodboy, A. K. (2009). The relation between teacher self-disclosure and student motives to communicate. *Communication Research Reports*, 26(2), 105-113.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- De Caro, e. e. R. (2009). The Advantages and Importance of Learning and Using Idioms in English. *Cuadernos de Lingüística Hispánica*, 14, 121-126.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2013). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Demszky, D., Liu, J. Mancenido, Z., Cohen, J., Hill, H., Jurafsky, D., and Hashimoto T. (2021). Measuring Conversational Uptake: A Case Study on Student-Teacher Interactions. In *Proceedings of the 59th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and the 11th International Joint Conference on Natural Language Processing (Volume 1: Long Papers)*, pages 1638–1653, Online. Association for Computational Linguistics.
- Ghonsooly, B., Khajavy, G. H., & Asadpour, S. F. (2012). Willingness to communicate in English among Iranian non-English major university students. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 31(2), 197-211.



- Goldstein, J. H., & Benassi, V. A. (1994). The relation between teacher self-disclosure and student classroom participation. *Teaching of Psychology, 21*(4), 212-217.
- Hagenauer, G., Muehlbacher, F., & Ivanova, M. (2023). "It's where learning and teaching begins – is this relationship" - insights on the teacher-student relationship at university from the teachers' perspective. *Higher education, 85*(4), 819–835. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00867-z>
- Henry, A., & Thorsen, C. (2021). Teachers' self-disclosures and influences on students' motivation: A relational perspective. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 24*(1), 1-15.
- Hinkel, E. (2011). What research on second language writing tells us and what it doesn't. *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning/Taylor & Francis Routledge.*
- Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 63*(6), 597-606.
- Jebbour, M. (2018). University students' perceptions of the effects of teacher self-disclosure in the English language classroom. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics, 3*(3), 275-285. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v3i3.166>
- Jourard, S. M., & Lasakow, P. (1958). Some factors in self-disclosure. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 56*, 91-98.
- Khodamoradi, A., Talebi, S. H., & Maghsoudi, M. (2020). The relationship between teacher personality and teacher interpersonal behavior: The case of Iranian teacher educators. *Applied Research on English Language, 9*(3), 325-348.
- Kök, M., & Kantar, A. (2024). The mediating role of self-disclosure in the relationship between masculine gender role stress and foreign language classroom anxiety. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 18*(2), 169-180.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). The input hypothesis: Issues and implications. *Longman.*
- Kromka, S. M. (2020). The effects of instructor self-disclosure on student learning outcomes and instructor credibility. *Communication Education, 69*(3), 298-317.
- Kuhzad, S., & Zarfsaz, E. (2023). The Relationship between Teachers' Self-Disclosure and EFL Students' Motivation for Class Participation. *Acuity: Journal of English Language Pedagogy, Literature and Culture, 8*(2), 303-312.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L. (2006). Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2013). Sociocultural theory: A dialectical approach to L2 research. In *The Routledge Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 57-72). Routledge.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. *Cambridge University Press.*
- Long, M. H. (1996). *The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition.* In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413-468). Academic Press.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Charos, C. (1996). Personality, attitudes, and affect as predictors of second language communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 15*(1), 3-26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927x960151001>



- MacIntyre, P. D., Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in an L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), 545-562.
- Martin, M. M., Myers, S. A., & Mottet, T. P. (1999). Students' motives for communicating with their instructors. *Communication Education*, 48, 155-164.
- McBride, M. C., & Wahl, S. T. (2005). "To Say or Not to Say:" Teachers' Management of Privacy Boundaries in the Classroom. *Texas Speech Communication Journal*, 30(1), 8-22.
- McCarthy, M., & O'Dell, F. (2002). *English idioms in use* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, J. F., & Scott, S. E. (1979). The effects of instructor's self-disclosure on student learning. *Communication Education*, 28(4), 276-286.
- Peng, J. E. (2014). Willingness to communicate in the Chinese EFL university classroom. (*No Title*).
- Peng, J. E., & Woodrow, L. (2010). Willingness to communicate in English: A model in the Chinese EFL classroom context. *Language learning*, 60(4), 834-876.
- Pham, Q. N., Ovalles, E. C., & Lau, E. (2020). The integration of technology in idiomatic language instruction: A synthesis of research in L2 contexts. *Journal of Foreign Language Education and Technology*, 5(2), 321-337.
- Qin, J. (2022). A theoretical review on the role of English as a foreign language teachers' self-disclosure in shaping classroom climate and immediacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. [https://doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2022.945046](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.945046).
- Rahmawati, L. E., Sulistyono, Y., Ratih, K., Hamidah, J., Istiqamah, I., Utami, N. M., ... & Noviafitri, K. S. (2024). Evaluation of Indonesian language course development focused on internationalization with goal-oriented model. *BAHA STRA*, 44(2), 177-204.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shirvan, M. E., & Taherian, T. (2020). Relational influences of a teacher's self-disclosure on the emergence of foreign language enjoyment patterns. In *Language education and emotions* (pp. 135-148). Routledge.
- Simon, K., Petrovic, L., Baker, C., & Overstreet, S. (2022). An Examination of the Associations Among Teacher Secondary Traumatic Stress, Teacher-Student Relationship Quality, and Student Socio-Emotional Functioning. *School Mental Health*, 14(2), 213-224. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-022-09507-4>
- Sorensen, G. (1989). The relationships among teachers' self-disclosive statements, students' perceptions, and affective learning. *Communication Education*, 38(3), 259-276.
- Taheri, M., Shahrokhi, M., & Talebinejad, M. R. (2024). Predicting EFL teacher's perceived self-disclosure practice: Demographic factors in focus. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies*, 11(2), 25-48. DOI: 10.30479/jmrels.2023.18781.2211
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.



- Weda, S., Atmowardoyo, H., Rahman, F., Said, M. M., & Sakti, A. E. F. (2021). Factors affecting students' willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms at higher institutions in Indonesia. *Andi Elsa Fadhillah Sakti*.
- Wei, X., & Xu, Q. (2022). Predictors of willingness to communicate in a second language (L2 WTC): Toward an integrated L2 WTC model from the socio-psychological perspective. *Foreign Language Annals*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12595>
- Wray, A. (2002). Formulaic language and the lexicon. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Woolfolk, A. E., & Woolfolk, R. L. (1975). Student self-disclosure in response to teacher verbal and nonverbal behavior. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 44(1), 36-40.
- Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(1), 54-66.
- Zyzik, E. (2011). Second language idiom learning: The effects of lexical knowledge and pedagogical sequencing. *Language Teaching Research*, 15(4), 413-433. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168811412025>.

### **Biodata**

**Masoud Taheri** is a Ph.D. candidate in English Language Education employed by the Iranian Ministry of Education. His research interests center on teacher profession development and EFL students' communicative competence development.

**Mohsen Shahrokhi** is an associate professor of Applied Linguistics and TESOL, currently affiliated with the Shahreza Branch of Islamic Azad University, Iran. With a focus on Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics, and English language teaching and learning, his scholarly contributions extend to various international refereed journals, where he has published several research papers.

**Mohammad Reza Talebinejad** is affiliated with Shahreza Branch of Islamic Azad University, Iran as an associate professor of Applied Linguistics. He has contributed to many research projects as a supervisor and coauthored several papers published in international refereed journals on EFL teacher training and professional development.

